

# *Cuban President Raul Castro May Visit Moscow this Year*

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Havana, March 20 (RHC) – Cuban President Raul Castro may visit Russia in 2015, the Cuban Ambassador to Russia Emilio Lozada Garcia told RIA Novosti this week.

"Bilateral exchanges with official delegations happen all the time. In this regard, a visit by Raul Castro may surely occur; however, it's too early to say because there have been no invitations or dates set," the diplomat said, as quoted by CubaSi website.

The Cuban diplomat said officials from both countries routinely paid visits to one another. Raul Castro travelled to Moscow in 2009 and 2012, while Dmitry Medvedev visited Cuba in 2008 and 2013, first as Russian president and then as prime minister.

Last year, Russian President Vladimir Putin and Cuba's Raul Castro met in Havana to seal energy deals. Russia also agreed to write off nearly 90 percent of Cuba's Soviet-era debt to Moscow -- some \$32 billion.

Over the past few months, Russia has been actively pursuing cooperation with Latin American countries, particularly in the sphere of defense amid NATO's military expansion in Eastern Europe, a tendency that has raised concerns in Moscow.

And on March 18, the director of the Latin American Department at Russia's Foreign Ministry, Alexander Schetinin, confirmed that foreign minister Serguei Lavrov will take a Latin American tour March 24-26, which includes Cuba

Russia and Cuba expect to establish a strategic relationship by further collaboration in the political, economic and commercial areas, as well as in foreign investment projects.

Schetinin said that Lavrov will meet a tight agenda in Havana focusing on bilateral issues and others of regional and international interest.

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